

The Star

15 NOV, 1989

Swapo's lesson of the polls

SO OFTEN full of surprises, Namibia has followed up its peaceful and democratic general election with a result that confounds most predictions. A number of important consequences are likely to flow from the strong minority representation in the new constituent assembly.

The first will become evident very soon. Swapo will have to horse-trade for allies among the other parties to secure the two-thirds majority for its preferred constitution. It will have to make compromises instead of calling the tune. This is bound to be a healthy learning experience for a party which has spent decades telling the world that it is the sole authentic spokesman for the Namibian people.

Swapo's most likely coalition partner, the United Democratic Front, shares essentially the same ideals but has come out more clearly than Swapo in favour of some basic democratic rights, including freedom of speech, a multi-party structure, free enterprise and private ownership. Swapo — not that it really had much choice in the matter —

will also have to temper its stance on relations with South Africa.

With more than a quarter of the total vote, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance has good reason to be satisfied with the outcome. It has no chance of forming its own coalition and excluding Swapo, but it has — if it holds together — the potential to be an influential opposition. However, the unity of the 11 different groups constituting the DTA may not survive the wheeling and dealing to come. It could come under considerable strain, in part because of the party's strong identification with white interests.

But whatever happens, and whatever the makeup of the future government, the elections ought to have administered a lesson for Swapo to remember — not to mention its supporters and sponsors abroad. Namibia is a land of many diverse and anxious minorities and it will have to be governed with their concerns in mind. The whites may be only 6 percent of the population but to retain their goodwill and trust will be vital.

Shock as Swapo's ^{15 Nov '89} legend bites the dust

WINDHOEK — The political legend of Swapo being the "sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" lay in tatters across the desert territory yesterday.

It is plain now that 40 to 50 out of every 100 Namibians have not heeded Swapo's siren call of "liberation" and that despite the cachet of having taken up arms for freedom, the organisation does not appeal to a proportion of the Namibian people.

Although Swapo will still emerge from the election with a simple majority, it will not come anywhere near attaining the two-thirds it and its backers thought would be a foregone conclusion when the Resolution 435 peace and independence plan finally went ahead.

The fact that Swapo has political

feet of clay inside its own country must surely have surprised many of its supporters among the African and non-aligned blocs at the UN — the countries which pushed through the "principle of sole and authentic representative" back in 1973. (There could still be a outcry from these countries about the results, but it seems fairly certain now that UN Special Representative Mr Martti Ahtisaari cannot but declare the process as having been free and fair.)

Fait accompli **STAR**

Perhaps it was the comfortable feeling of unquestioned supremacy in the international arena — engendered by the "sole and authentic" label — which led to complacency on Swapo's part. Certainly, Swapo's leaders

The fact that Swapo has political feet of clay will do much to assist President FW de Klerk's reformist policies. **By BRENDAN SEERY of The Star's Africa News Service.**

seemed unable to comprehend a situation where they did not emerge hugely victorious.

Mr Sam Nujoma has spoken on many occasions of the organisation polling 80 or even 90 percent in the election, while none of the top hierarchy has been prepared to think about anything less than two-thirds.

Whatever the cause, the decline of Swapo is now a fait accompli. What that means in Namibian terms remains to be seen, but the organisation

will be under heavy international pressure (at least from Western donor countries who will provide the vital post-independence aid and investment) to accept the result.

Glib assumption

However, the humbling of Swapo will be just what the doctor ordered for the reformist policies of South African State President de Klerk.

Since the Portuguese coup in 1974, conventional wisdom has been that liberation movements would topple white governments in a southward-moving domino effect. Frelimo in Mozambique and Zanu (PF) in Zimbabwe converted their battlefield prestige into strong political victories, while the MPLA in Angola

used force of arms to secure its seat in power.

It was glibly assumed that Swapo would do the same, and that the radical and violent winds of change would eventually blow across South Africa.

The strong showing of the DTA, and the votes gained by the ACN and UDF, will be regarded by Pretoria as a triumph for the moderate point of view. It will also be viewed as a blow to the politics of violence espoused by liberation movements like the ANC.

It will also strengthen Mr de Klerk's hand when he tells the international community that South African political opinion — like that in its neighbour Namibia — has many shades of grey between the black and white extremes.

COMMENT

Face to face

THE result of the Namibian elections, which both denied Swapo the two-thirds majority required to impose a constitution and denied the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance the one-third that would have constituted a blocking minority, has given the people of that territory the best possible chance of creating a democratic state. Both the major parties are under pressure, though of different kinds, to negotiate in good faith.

This means that the divided people of the territory will, unlike the people of Zimbabwe, be compelled to deal with one another face to face, without excessive foreign intervention, to thrash out compromise solutions to their many problems — provided the minority parties remain uncorrupted.

The worst possible sequel would be for those minority parties that hold the balance between two-thirds and one-third, to succumb, as Swapo leaders have cynically suggested they would do, to offers of high positions in return for their votes. So long as the minor leaders stand firm, Swapo will be forced to confront the need to devise democratic institutions, protection for civil liberties, the needs of organised minorities, and so forth. In the end, Namibia could come to independence under a home-made constitution, responsive to the needs and fears of its people, to which all its varied communities would give their allegiance.

The process will not be quick. Administrator-General Louis Pien-

aar suggested a few months ago that the constituent assembly might need a month or longer to adopt its own rules. The substantive negotiations, he suggested, might take another year. Meanwhile, he will continue to administer the territory, to control its budget, and to be responsible for law and order.

This is where the problems lie: Swapo may or may not have a large force of armed men (or, more likely, several smaller bands) north of the Angolan border, but the SADF is obliged to withdraw its last 1 500 men as soon as the election has been certified "free and fair" by UN representative Martti Ahtisaari; Koevoet has been disbanded; and the budget for the territory is stretched. The longer the haggling in the constituent assembly drags on, the more likely that something will "go wrong" — Swapo troops may come across the border to claim the cushy jobs and the land they were promised by their leaders, farms may be occupied by squatters, the budget restrictions may compel cutbacks in services and a heightening of communal tensions, and so forth.

For South Africa, the worst possibility is a breakdown of negotiations which leads, one way or another, to civil disorder. Powerful parties in this country, the military foremost amongst them, will surely press for a reoccupation of the territory in order to try to undo history. For South Africans, therefore, it might have been better if Swapo had won its two-thirds majority, so that South Africa could shed its Namibian albatross at once.

ABOUT 40 years ago I asked an Irish priest in Dublin to explain Ireland's problems.

"Problems? What problems? We haven't any problems in Ireland. It's just those damned Protestants up north."

This anecdote has a certain relevance in SA.

For the international community the white Pretoria government is a euphemism for the cruel racialists who practise something called "apetite", as I once heard it called at the UN.

There is a popular misconception that were the Pretoria establishment to be replaced, were the SA version of "those damned Protestants up north" to be spirited away, the country's problems would be over.

Meanwhile, the SA English-speaker continues to mutter away about human dignity. But long before Die Burger was even a gleam in the eyes of the Afrikaner, the English Press was portraying the racialistic attitudes of the SA English-speaker.

It revealed almost 100 years ago that the Afrikaner had not always held the monopoly of racial bigotry here and, in those days, the HNP would have found congenial bedfellows in *die Engelse*.

SA's English: a racist history

In 1939 Prof R F Hoernlé, in the course of the Phelps-Stokes lectures, said that while the English had brought with them from England ideals of liberty which, under the influence of nineteenth century humanitarianism, spanned barriers of colour, race and creed, "they soon learned to temporise and draw back as the implications of admitting the non-European inhabitants of SA into partnership in liberty came generally to be realised".

Mutiny

Letters and Press reports in The Barberton Herald, Transvaal Mining Mail (1888-1890) and The Diamond Fields Advertiser (1888-1890) bore all this out. Besides local news, these papers published reports from Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban.

In 1888, at the DuToitspan mine in Kimberley, blacks had staged a mutiny that was quelled, by means unspecified, by a man named Rowe who was subsequently fined £5 or a short period of imprisonment with hard labour for his pains.

PATRICIA McMAGH

An irate correspondent sprang to his defence. Rowe's action, the letter said, had saved his own life as well as that of his fellow overseers from "black savages".

"Education (Christian or otherwise), over-remuneration, over-feeding and pampering are the weapons placed indirectly by the white man in the hands of the black man and are the means whereby this savage will be induced by enlightenment to become dissatisfied with his subservient position with respect to us, his conquerors and masters, at the same time creating in this savage a desire for mastery."

The murder of Samuel Cox, a white mine-engine driver from Langlaagte, was committed by seven "kafirs" who killed him apparently for *muti*.

They were duly apprehended and tried and the death penalty imposed on them elicited a petition to govern-

ment: could they be publicly executed in Johannesburg? This would afford the managers of companies the opportunity to see that their "boys" were present so that the execution might serve as a warning to them.

The degree of illiteracy among the rank and file probably rendered the blacks immune to journalistic excesses at the time.

Calamity

They continued blithely on their way while the papers reported that the blacks in Pretoria were growing more insolent: they failed to move their ox wagons off the road at the approach of the white man in his spider, and the cheeky natives had nicknamed the field-cornet "Seven Pounds Ten" — the sum he had been fined for "boxing a coolie's ears".

It took a calamity of the magnitude of the fire at the De Beers mine in 1888 to purge the English Press, temporarily at least, of some of its rancour: about 400 black miners and 40 white men died.

The whites were usually transported underground in a skip: the blacks used a ladder-way.

After the disaster the borehole was choked with the dead and dying black miners who had been asphyxiated by the fumes.

"Great sympathy is felt for the natives who met so fearful a death. It is usually believed that the native is impervious to the emotions which death brings into activity in the case of the white man, but the theory has not held good on this mournful occasion... Tribal differences are, for the time being, forgotten, and many stalwart kafirs have been seen sobbing bitterly at the thought of the fate that has overcome their brothers."

In 1939 Hoernlé said: "The difference between the government party and the Nationalist opposition is merely one of degree: when the latter beats the racial drum the legs of most of the government supporters twitch in sympathy with the tune."

We have, perhaps, come a long way since then. We are less strident, perhaps more understanding and, if God be willing, our social engineers will increase their proficiency at building cross-cultural bridges.

New body seen as PAC counter to the MDM

By Tony Stirling

THE formation of a political movement under the Pan Africanist umbrella — announced in Johannesburg this week — is being seen by intelligence as the Pan Africanist counter to the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) during a period of mass mobilisation by the two rival movements.

Although the Pan Africanist Movement says it is an independent organisation from the Pan Africanist Congress, with which it shares a political ideology, there is little doubt in Pretoria that it is intended to mobilise Pan Africanist support in much the same way as the MDM has been doing for the Charterists.

Because both the PAC and ANC are banned organisations in South Africa, neither can campaign overtly, and so internal organisations and support groups have been left the task, according to intelligence sources.

In the case of those groups ideologically supporting the ANC, notably the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), there was an obstacle to overt activity by both

organisations because they were restricted.

Thus, a vehicle in the form of the MDM had been used, of which the UDF and Cosatu claim to be the driving force.

The Pan Africanists faced a similar dilemma through the restrictions imposed on the Azanian Peoples' Organisation (Azapo) and the Azanian Youth Organisation.

The sources said that the recent mass marches in various centres and the welcoming rally for released security prisoners at Soccer City Stadium in Johannesburg were identified largely as having been initiatives of the MDM, and that the Pan Africanists had been seen to be losing out in the mobilisation stakes.

On the internal front within the Pan Africanist movement, the youth organisations appeared to have upstaged the Old Guard.

It was of significance to note that the Press conference, at which the formation of the new movement was announced, was held under the banner of the Pan Africanist Student Organisation (Paso), which in October appeared at the forefront of efforts within Pan Africanist groups to unify them.

Inquest into death of Lesotho ministers

AN inquest court will hear evidence today on the alleged murder of two former Lesotho cabinet ministers and their wives three years ago.

An official in the Maseru Magistrate's Court told a packed courtroom yesterday that the inquest court would first visit the scene of the murders.

The ministers, in the cabinet of the

late prime minister Chief Leabua Jonathan, were Information and Broadcasting Minister Desmond Sixishe and Foreign Minister Vincent Makhele.

They were allegedly murdered with their wives at Bushmen Pass in the Maluti Mountains on November 16 1986 by men wearing military uniforms. - Sapa.

State forced to prop up town councils

SOWETON - 15 Nov. 1989

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IT is increasingly apparent that the central Government and its parastatals are going to have to continue to shoulder the burden of funding infrastructure in black areas.

This is because the black local authorities don't have anywhere near the resources they need to

do the job themselves, and the Regional Services Councils (RSCs) have so far not been able to back them up on the scale that is required.

This emerges from the South African Institute of Race Relations' latest review of social and economic developments, *Update 8*.

The publication notes that direct Government spending on upgrading is still more than ten times the amount spent by the RSCs.

Moreover, the amount spent by State and parastatal funds on development in black areas is growing and will probably grow even more in the foreseeable future, *Update 8* says.

Spending

The publication notes that Government officials themselves acknowledge that RSC funding alone cannot eliminate existing backlogs in the townships - even though RSC spending should increase substantially in the next year.

According to *Update 8*, the authorities appear to be looking to the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) to take on increasing responsibility for infrastructure in black rural and urban areas.

Estimates of spending on infrastructural upgrading quoted in *Update 8*

show that in 1988/89 the RSCs have spent R92 million, mostly in black areas, while the National Housing Fund, for Africans, has spent R270 million. The DBSA has spent R341 million for upgrading in black areas and the provinces have spent R348 million on bridging finance for African local authorities.

Elaine Cosser, the Institute's research officer responsible for *Update*, points out that despite continued state funding, black local authorities are unable to maintain, let alone develop, township infrastructure.

She points out that Mr Olaus van Zyl, the member of the Transvaal executive committee responsible for local government, estimates that black local authorities in the Transvaal would need to increase their total income by 40 per cent in order to be financially independent.

Turning to the provincial administrations, *Update 8* says that the need

to pour money into black areas is clearly a source of anxiety for provincial officials, who are eager to divert this money to health and other areas under their jurisdiction. They hope that continued funding from central Government will enable them to retreat further from local authority financing.

The publication notes that the provinces are also hoping to shift more of the burden for funding black local authorities onto residents.

Appeal

While Van Zyl has proposed the introduction of assessment rates in black townships, Mr Danie Hough, administrator of the Transvaal, has appealed to black local authorities to gradually increase tariffs to bring them to an economical level.

But, *Update 8* warns, "attempts to raise local authority revenue from township residents prompted the conflicts between 1984 and 1986. Similar attempts now could either generate conflict or prompt increased defaulting, which would ensure that local authorities would not collect the revenue they require."

Update 8 is available from the Publications Department of the South African Institute of Race Relations, P O Box 31044, Braamfontein, at R10.50 inclusive, (R8.50 plus R2 postage and packing).

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FOCUS



Some long-overdue upgrading has taken place in black townships like Alexandra. But decent, comfortable housing for all appears a long way off, with black local authorities unable to cope financially.

Wednesday 15 November 1989



Supporters of Namibia's Democratic Turnhalle Alliance celebrate a local victory in Okahandja district, north of Windhoek

pared with the detainee issue. Speaking off the record, senior Swapo officials admit that what went on in Swapo's camps in Angola may have cost the movement its two-thirds majority in the Assembly. The failure of the military campaign raised questions about Swapo's internal security. Suddenly there seemed to be South African spies everywhere. The paranoia grew, and about 2,000

exiled Swapo members were detained in underground pits, some for several years. They were beaten and tortured as Swapo attempted to extract confessions from them and force them to name more spies.

Most of the detainees were from the central and southern regions of Namibia, and when the survivors returned they brought appalling stories of their deten-

tion in Angola. Some, wanting to stay with Swapo, demanded an inquiry but Mr Nujoma has rejected the idea. He still dismisses the detainees' claims as propaganda and retains the man responsible for Swapo's security, Solomon Jesus Ahuala, on his personal staff.

Division and war may be endemic in Africa, but it is matched by a profound capacity for reconciliation. The next few weeks will

show which will win in Namibia. Had Swapo won the election by a huge majority, its leaders might not have needed to take their declarations on national reconciliation seriously. Now it must work with its former enemies if the country is to have a new constitution and hold together politically. The result could be that rare event in politics, especially African politics, the best of all worlds.

15/11/89

Swapo content with less than unanimous verdict

IN THE MIDDLE of last week, the lady who sells Herero dolls to tourists outside the Kalahari Sands Hotel here began, for the first time, to display a few dolls dressed in Swapo colours. There being no opinion polls in this country, it seemed the nearest thing to a detectable shift in the political wind. Like everyone else, she guessed Swapo would win. The only question had been, by how much?

Swapo used to claim that it would win between 80 and 90 per cent in an election in Namibia. Ten days ago, Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, the secretary-general of Swapo, claimed that if they did not win by that margin, the election would not have been free and fair. On Monday night, the tension mounted as the election results came in. Government and United Nations officials, party workers and journalists, all stabbed furiously at calculators and pored over rows of figures, none of which added up to an overwhelming Swapo victory. Everyone began to ask what Swapo would do.

Then Tuesday morning dawned and Swapo supporters danced in the streets. They had scraped around 57 per cent of the votes, but for them it was victory. "It's fine," said Hidipo Hamutenya, Swapo's director of information. The election has been an astonishing exercise in democracy. The

Concern about human rights cost Swapo support in Namibia's election. Now it must work with its rivals, writes Richard Dowden in Windhoek.

turnout was almost 100 per cent and although there were long queues in a broiling sun, there were almost no reports of trouble in the voting stations. Swapo maintained strict discipline among its supporters, and the South Africans were on their best behaviour. Supporters of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance tried to make mischief by dropping anti-Swapo leaflets from planes or hanging flags near voting booths, but their effect was marginal. They get up to dirtier tricks in Kensington.

"It was relatively free," Mr Hamutenya said. Swapo is not challenging the result. But the outcome raises some questions. In 1973, Swapo was recognised by the UN as the "sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people" — a title which the reality of the ballot-box has hardly confirmed. But has Swapo recently lost support, or has it never really outgrown its origins as the Ovamboland People's Congress, founded in a Cape Town barber's shop in 1958?

About half Namibia's population lives on a thin strip of land along the northern border, separated from the rest of the country

by semi-desert. In its Ovambo homeland the movement won 92 per cent of the vote. In the seven other areas where Swapo came first, there are many Ovambo-speaking migrant workers.

Elsewhere there were similar displays of regional or tribal solidarity. The whites seem to have voted solidly for the National Christian Action party, and in the north-east in Koakaland, once a target area for Swapo guerrilla infiltration, the Ovahimba people remain strongly anti-Swapo. Far from seeing Swapo as liberators, they regard them as cattle thieves. In Damaraland, the traditional leader, Justus Garoeb, picked up enough votes to give the United Democratic Front first place. Elsewhere, however, the anti-Swapo vote has gone to the multi-racial DTA.

Long denounced by Swapo and its supporters as puppets, the DTA ran a campaign of beer and feasting. It was glossy, noisy, well-organised and well-funded from South Africa. The parallels with Bishop Abel Muzorewa in Rhodesia were strong enough to convince many that the voters would "eat with DTA and vote with Swapo". The DTA, a multi-party

and multi-racial alliance, has been in and out of government here for the past 11 years under South African supervision. Although it is tarnished as collaborationist, it has delivered relative economic prosperity which most of the country has enjoyed in the past few years. Money has been spent improving facilities in the towns. There is a growing black middle class and a powerful trade union movement which has improved wages. The DTA stands on its economic record.

But DTA successes do not entirely explain Swapo's failure. As a military force, Swapo has not succeeded in creating any no-go areas by guerrilla warfare. Meanwhile, the South Africans successfully turned a colonial war into a civil war by recruiting more and more locals into the frontline. Unable to prove to the people it had won militarily, Swapo had to change from being a liberation movement to a political party, standing on its no-compromise record. The return of the exiled leadership was the high point of Swapo's triumphal campaign, but after that its rallies became ragged and uninspiring. One of the problems was that Sam Nujoma, Swapo's president, could not get close to the crowds. Two Swapo leaders had already been murdered, and many were afraid that Mr Nujoma would be next. But these were minor problems com-



Namibia

Doing battle in the polls the DTAs Dirk Mudge takes on Swapo's Sam Nujoma

lates a threshold quota by dividing the total of all votes for all parties by 72, then divides each party's votes by the quota to allocate seats; the formula favours low-polling rather than high-polling contestants if there are odd seats unfulfilled by the quota allocation).

The system appears simple to the voter, with the complexities left to the electoral officers. In practice the party names and symbols will not be easily distinguishable on the small and crowded ballot paper: nine out of the 10 parties have variants on the human hand or fist as the symbol, and the tenth - a white-oriented right-wing party - shows a map of Africa and a cross.

Swapo is listed below the minuscule breakaway Swapo-D of Andreas Shipanga, which has hijacked Swapo's established symbol of the 'freedom torch' and even issued posters displaying the Swapo flag's colours of blue, red and green. Swapo has introduced a new symbol of a man raising an arm with clenched fist (the popular 'power salute') and is busy educating the voter to recognise this manikin figure.

Observers regard Swapo and the DTA as the main contestants, with Swapo well in the lead and capable of winning the two thirds of Constituent Assembly seats required to pass a constitution. The DTA is identified with minor ethnic parties and South African colonialism. Its chairman is a wealthy middle-aged cattle farmer, Dirk Mudge, who came on the political scene as a supporter of South Africa, moved to white nationalism and later to accommodation with conservative black forces such as traditional chiefs. His lavish and violent election campaign is bears all the hallmarks of having been by South Africa.

Mudge has little charisma to offer the 95 per cent of the population who are black, and little appeal to died-in-the-wool conservatives in the white minority.

Namibia effectively has no system of pre-election public opinion polls (and no prior genuine history of elections), but the registration pattern does point some ways to the likely result. Out of a total of 698,953 registered voters, 244,067 are recorded in Ovamboland (which could determine the result of 25 out of the 72 seats) and 134,422 in Windhoek, where Swapo has strong support among internal migrant workers (14 seats are likely to be determined in the Windhoek district). These two districts should account for more than half the Constituent Assembly seats, with the rest shared out among the less populated districts, with Swapo doing well in the mining areas of Tsumeb and Swakopmund. When the final election result is announced in Windhoek in November the Ahtisaari-Pienaar duel will not be over. Ahtisaari has to certify whether the election has been 'free and fair', and barring an uncontrollable upsurge of pre-election violence and provided that there is a reasonable turnout, he will give that certificate. Pienaar has already tried to exploit a vagueness in the original UN plan as to how the Assembly should operate and the extent of its powers. He has appeared to want to make it subject to South African control. Ahtisaari on the other hand appears to favour giving the Assembly very broad scope to shape the next government. Attitudes may harden in the light of the eventual voting figures, but on present showing, the impetus towards early independence for Namibia must be unstoppable.

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The 10 registered parties in the Namibia elections appearing on the ballot paper will be:

- AKSIE CHRISTELIK NASIONAAL (ACN)
- CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ACTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CDA)
- DTA VAN NAMIBIE (DTA)
- FEDERAL CONVENTION OF NAMIBIA (FCN)
- NAMIBIA NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NNDP)
- NAMIBIA NATIONAL FRONT (NNF)
- NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FRONT OF NAMIBIA (NPF)
- SWAPO-DEMOCRATS (SWAPO D)
- SWAPO OF NAMIBIA (SWAPO)
- UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF NAMIBIA (UDF)

Holland's new coalition may reverse anti-sanctions line

Y44: Southscan (Br). 89 10 23

A NEW balance of forces in the Dutch ruling coalition may mean that Holland - in a complete turnaround - will intensify sanctions against South Africa.

The possibility was being actively discussed within the emerging ruling centre-left coalition last week, according to local press reports.

If the policy change is decided on it will reassert the restrictive measures aspect of EEC policy in contrast to the prevailing British preference for 'positive measures', say local commentators.

Since 1986 Holland has increasingly sided with Britain and West Germany on this issue. Policy in the Hague has been that sanctions action could only be taken with the agreement of all EEC countries.

There has been concern among anti-apartheid campaigners that the

impending formation of a single market in the EEC in 1992 would deter governments from taking unilateral sanctions action - despite continuing lack of progress in South Africa on dismantling the structure of apartheid (as opposed to aspects of apartheid repression).

The recent developments in Dutch policy have strengthened growing demands in neighbouring Belgium for a joint Benelux coal embargo. Belgium and Holland import a significant amount of South African coal via their ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

The demands have come from the chairman of the Socialist Party, Frank van den Broucke, and from the Flemish Christian Democrats - both part of the ruling coalition.

The leader of the Flemish Christian Democrats,

Luc Dhoore, said earlier this month that he had contacted his opposite number in Holland to try to get movement on the issue.

Dutch Christian Democratic Foreign Minister Van Den Broek and secretary of state Van Voorst tot Voorst are thought to favour giving South Africa's President De Klerk between six months and a years grace and have said that now is not the moment for a sharpening of economic sanctions.

In any event, coal sanctions could not be in place before that date. If a coal boycott were agreed it would be a gradually intensifying one: there are too many contracts still in operation. But if a number of Belgian contracts are not renewed it will serve to warn Pretoria that Belgium is serious about sanctions, Dhoore said last week.

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